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Your Drinking Water

Cold Weather Tips

Cold Weather Tips so you are not left **out in the cold** this winter. Frigid temperatures and gusty winds can cause one of winter's worst woes -- frozen water pipes. But home and business owners can take the following simple precautions to prevent the inconvenience and expense of frozen water pipes.

- **Turn off outside faucets.**
Disconnect the hose. Turn off the water from inside your home or business, and then drain the pipe. Leave the outside valve open slightly so any water left in the pipe can flow out and not freeze in the line.
- **Patch any cracks and holes in doors, windows, and walls near pipes.**
When the temperature drops to near zero, a high wind blowing through a small opening can freeze a nearby pipe, even though the temperature in the room is 70° F. When patching these openings, do not block the air vents that your furnace needs for proper combustion.
- **Make sure that heat can circulate around your pipes.**
Pipes inside or outside walls, or in an enclosed area, can freeze, especially when the wind-chill factor is well below zero and heat is not circulating through these areas.
- **Insulate pipes and faucets in unheated areas.**
Wrap pipes with the pipe-insulating material, which is available at hardware and plumbing supply stores, or use insulation. Be sure to protect all pipes in unheated areas, such as crawl spaces and garages.
- **Check with your local water utility before allowing your water to run overnight.**
This practice will not necessarily prevent pipes from freezing. Instead, it wastes water and increases your water bill. Check with your local water utility about the necessity of running water overnight under special circumstances.
- **Check insulation around pipes regularly.**
Older-model furnaces generated sufficient heat to warm basements in cold weather. However, today's energy-efficient heaters limit wasted heat.

Homeowners with wood stoves or other heat sources often turn down the furnace, which could lower temperatures in the basement.

- **Never shut off your heat completely.**

If you are planning to leave your home or business for an extended period and you don't drain your pipes, you should lower your thermostat (minimum 60 degrees during freezing weather) but never shut it off. The lack of heat can freeze the pipes in walls and the basement. If freezing occurs, the pipes can burst. When the area warms up, the thawing water could cause flooding and possible property damage.

What If Your Pipes Freeze?

- If despite these precautions, your pipes do freeze, it is best to call a licensed plumber. Make sure you keep the name and telephone number of your plumber handy throughout the winter.
- If you locate the frozen section of pipe and try to thaw it yourself make sure you are comfortable and knowledgeable enough to do so. At a minimum be sure to take the following precautions to protect yourself and your property:
- Check the pipe to be sure it is not conducting electricity due to your homes electrical wiring using the pipe as a ground.
- **Don't use a torch with an open flame.**
You risk setting your property on fire. Also, overheating one area can cause the pipe to burst.
- **Do** Place a warm towel or rag around the pipe.
- **Make sure you know the location of your master shut-off valve.** The frozen pipe may already be broken and, when the water is thawed, it will leak. In this case, you will need to shut off the water in your home or business until the leaky pipe is fixed.